

10. (Amended) A stabilized cell, [previously] permeabilized, for use as an internal control in methods for isolating and identifying rare cells, said control cell having determinants in common with said rare cells, wherein said control cell is labeled redundantly with at least two distinct fluorescent labels having the same spectral properties, and cellular components and antigenic moieties of said control cell have been stabilized for [at least six months] a long-term storage period by exposure to fixative.

15. (Cancel) Use of specific trade names.

16. (Amended) A stabilized cell, [previously] permeabilized, for use as an internal control in methods for isolating and identifying rare cells, said stabilized control cell having determinants in common with said rare cells, and comprising a detectably labeled membrane, said cells further comprising stabilized cellular components and antigenic moieties, said stabilization being effected by exposure to a fixative, wherein said control cell is a tumor cell expressing EpCam on its surface and cytokeratin intracellularly.

20. (Amended) The control cell of 16, wherein said membrane is redundantly labeled with at least two distinct fluorescent labels having the same spectral properties.

22. (Amended) The control cell as claimed in claim 16, said cell being an MCF-7 breast cancer cell, further comprising a second detectably labeled surface determinant which is an estrogen determinant.

23. (Amended) The control cell as claimed in claim 16, said cell being an LNCaP prostate cancer cell, further comprising a second detectably labeled surface determinant selected from the group consisting of PSMA, PSA, and an androgen determinant.

28. (Amended) A stabilized cell, [previously] permeabilized, for use as an internal control in methods for isolating and identifying rare cells, said stabilized control cell having determinants in common with said rare cells, and comprising a redundantly labeled membrane, said membrane being labeled with at least two distinct fluorescent labels having the same spectral properties, said cells further comprising stabilized cellular components and antigenic moieties, said stabilization being effected by exposure to a fixative, wherein said control cell is selected from the group consisting of tumor cells, bacterially infected cells, virally infected cells, myocardial cells, and endothelial cells in circulation, and fetal cells in maternal circulation.

32. (Cancel) Use of specific trade names.

35. (Amended) An improved method for detecting and enumerating rare cells in a mixed cell population, the presence of said rare cells in said population being indicative of severity of a disease state, comprising:

- a) obtaining a blood sample from a test subject, said sample comprising a mixed cell population suspected of containing said rare cells;
- b) preparing an immunomagnetic sample wherein said blood sample is mixed with magnetic particles coupled to a ligand which reacts specifically with a determinant of the rare cells, to the substantial exclusion of other sample components;
- c) contacting said immunomagnetic sample with at least one reagent which labels a determinant of said rare cells; and
- d) analyzing said labeled rare cells to determine the presence and number of any rare cells in said immunomagnetic sample, the greater the number of rare cells present in said sample, the greater the severity of said disease state, wherein the improvement comprises the addition of a stabilized cell, [previously] permeabilized, for use as an internal control cell in said method, said control cell having determinants in common with said rare cells and wherein said membrane of said control cell is detectably labeled and cellular components and antigenic moieties of said control cell have been stabilized for [at least six months] a long-term storage period by exposure to fixative.